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THE STAR OF THE EAST

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an ecumenical journal dealing specially with
the oriental and eastern orthodox churches

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An ecumenical journal dealing specially with
the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches

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A CALL FOR VIGILANCE AND HOPE

As the New Year 1987 approaches, a sensitive Indian Christian looking at the world experiences both apprehension and hope.

Apprehension, first because of what he observes in his own nation. We in India are in danger of losing what is most precious in our heritage: i.e. communal harmony and respect—not just tolerance—for other religious traditions. The four major religious groups in India all share—though not equally—the responsibility for disrupting this great heritage of ours—Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs.

There is one fact, however, which is somewhat striking. While there have been major incidents in which the Hindu community has come into conflict with the other three, there is no instance of a major conflict among any two of the three minority communities. A hundred million Muslims, 25 million Christians and 18 million Sikhs seem to be able to get along with each other. Of the six hundred million Hindus, however, another fact should also be observed—namely that the vast majority of them remain uninfected by the communal virus. Quite naturally Hindus have formed the majority of the hundreds of thousands who have marched and demonstrated for peace and communal harmony in the capital city in December. Several thousands of these demonstrators came from the Punjab.

Clearly the masses of India do not want communal conflict. And yet these conflicts keep flaring up. In many cases there have been *agents provocateurs*. In some cases, the origin of conflict eruption remains mysteriously hidden. In other cases, one of our neighbour nations has been demonstrably involved.

While Indians can never wash their hands clean of the responsibility for the eruption of communal conflict, the idea that foreign-financed and trained *agents provocateurs* are behind many of these eruptions cannot be dismissed as fanciful or far-fetched.

The recent student protests in Beijing, China, aborted coups in the Philippines and ethnic protests in Kazakhstan, USSR, support the view that the art of destabilization is far advanced, and their 'dirty tricks' increasingly take the place of open threats and war, in seeking to place in each nation a government of some other nation's choice.

Christians have to be especially careful not to let themselves be used by the forces of disruption and de-stabilisation. A particular drama on the temptation of Christ, of doubtful literary quality, may hurt the feelings of Christians because it insults and dishonours the purity of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. After all, the author and producer of the drama does not belong to any other community than the Christian one. He may have intentionally or unintentionally used somewhat shocking techniques to ensure the success of his play. It may be true that scenes in the play appears outrageous to the Christian conscience.

But there would be absolutely nothing Christian about Christians staging a big quasi-political demonstration against such an insult. We are, as Christians, called upon cheerfully to bear such insults and to pray for those who insult or persecute us.

One of the dastardliest tricks in the bag of the "Dirty Tricks Department" de-stabilisers, is to insult religious feelings and rouse deep-seated hostile passions among the pious. Christians, as well as others, have to be especially vigilant, not to be taken in by such tricks.

Another reason for apprehension is the slow pace at which attempts to heal our national malaise move forward. Our Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, like General Secretary Gorbachyov of the USSR seems to have put his major hope for the future of our nation on two thrusts—(a) the mobilisation of creative human resources in our country mainly through educational and cultural promotion, and (b) the acquisition and harnessing of modern science and the technology based on it to increase our economic productivity.

It is too early to say whether the new thinking and the new

experiments along these two lines will bear fruit in the Soviet-Union. They have been at it for hardly a few months.

We have been talking big in India about the same two thrusts for the last two years at least. And yet our performance so far is dismally depressing. Our economic growth rate went *down*, if the B.J.P. is to be believed. The new educational policy has come out with hardly any teeth, and seems at present incapable of achieving any remarkable progress in technologisation or vocation-alisation. Recent seminars on these subjects clearly show that the government does not have these matters in hand. A lot of money is spent in unworkable and toothless programmes and reports which would never be implemented in large part.

A third reason for apprehension is the fact that there is little sign of genuine advances in the campaign against poverty, ill-health, malnutrition and literacy. It should be clear that this enormous problem of our people in India cannot be solved by government. The solution is in the hands of the people. The political parties are supposed to make it possible for the masses to organize and mobilize themselves to tackle these problems. The state should support and finance an operation led by the people themselves. At present there are no signs of either the political parties or the state moving in this direction, and one's apprehension is that many more millions would die before a really effective people's movement begins to advance.

And yet, we are not without hope. 1986 was a rather dismal year—both in the area of national catastrophes and conflicts, as also in the international stalemate in arms reduction and building up of confidence among nations.

A new stage in the arms race is what we do not want. The Strategic Defence Initiative precisely initiated that new stage. West Europeans and the Japanese seem to feel the pressure to start a show of their own or have to depend on other people's S.D.I. The Russians feel the economic and political pressure to spend more to counter-act the S.D.I., perhaps not so much by developing an S.D.I. of their own, but by creating a cheap way to make the "enemy" S.D.I. ineffective.

The end result may seem at first that the S.D.I. and the new stage in the arms race are gaining momentum. But hope springs from the fact that a sufficient number of people in America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and in the Two-third world are developing the perception that the whole thing is crazy.

Nuclear war-fighting technology was developed, ostensibly on the plea that conventional defence is more expensive. The fact is that we are still spending much more than before on conventional weapons and spending a similar amount on nuclear weapons. This is crazy, and we must get rid of both nuclear weapons and conventional weapons. We should move from the "law of the jungle" (apologies to environmentalists who argue that the jungle is much more peaceful and sane than human society) which prevails in international relations today. The perception is growing in many circles that we have to move from the idea that the state is there to protect "national interests", to a new vision in which states become responsible, law-abiding, democratic member of a community of nations which includes the whole of humanity.

That vision indeed is a sign of hope. May it begin to become reality in 1987.

TRIBUTE TO NIKOS NISSIOTIS*

—Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios

It is some time since Nikos Nissiotis is gone to his Lord. The firmament of orthodox theology and ecumenism has lost one of its brightest stars a few months ago.

Ever since he left the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Geneva and went to his native Greece, Nikos, precisely because of his ecumenical commitment, found himself in conflict with the anti-ecumenical circles in the leadership of the Orthodox Church of Greece. He bore the pain of that conflict with characteristic courage and modesty, and contented himself with whatever he could do to open up the minds of the theological students at Athens University.

He diverted some of his energies into the field of national and international sports, serving on the World Olympic Committee. He found that non-theological students in the faculties of medicine and psychology were sometimes better able to grasp his ideas than theological students. He experienced some fulfilment in lecturing in the psychology of religion and related fields.

Unfairly denied any significant role in the leadership of the Church, Nikos showed real greatness in refusing to complain, and in diverting his energies to other creative pursuits.

An automobile accident took him away from us - a little mistake on the part of one of the most skilful drivers I have known. His gifted wife Marina survived that accident, though she too had to be hospitalized for a long time with multiple fractures.

Nikos married late. It was a difficult decision for one who was in his forties. He was Associate Director of the Ecumenical

*We regret that we were unable to include this tribute in our last issue.

Institute in Bossey when he decided to marry. He went to Dr. Visser't Hooft, the General Secretary of the W.C.C. to tell him that he was getting married. Dr. Visser't Hooft loved Nikos as if he were his own son. So he was worried about this late marriage of Nikos. I was Associate General Secretary of the W.C.C. and the Ecumenical Institute was part of my administrative responsibility. Visser't Hooft asked me what I thought of Nikos' marriage at such a late age. As a result of our discussion, it was decided that I should go to Athens to "interview" Nikos' would-be bride.

I remember that "interview" very well now, when Marina came to the home of Nikos' father, the venerable orthodox priest Father Angelos Nissiotis. I remember even better when I came back to report to Dr. Visser't Hooft about my interview with Marina. Among other things I told him:

"Marina is exceptionally gifted and able. She speaks so many languages fluently-not only Greek, but English, French, German Swedish and some other languages. She is also an experienced and successful business woman with high administrative competence".

I remember Dr. Visser't Hooft's remark: "My God, that sounds like the candidate we are looking for, to succeed me as W.C.C. General Secretary."

We are grateful to God that Marina has survived the accident, and even came out of the hospital in a cast to attend Nikos' funeral. Marina is a brave woman indeed.

Nikos was one of the few Orthodox theologians who understood the West at depth, and could interpret the Eastern tradition to the West with unparalleled competence. This was far from a propagandistic advocacy of Orthodoxy; what moved Nikos was the desire to find a common mind and common idiom among all Christians. Nikos played a very important role in the shaping of several Second Vatican Council documents, and was an active participant in the Joint Working Group set up by the W.C.C. and the Roman Catholic Church. He has not only influenced several

generations of Orthodox theological students; but he opened up the treasures of the Eastern Orthodox Church to many Protestants and Roman Catholics, as well as to the Orthodox themselves.

But above all Nikos was a good, loving gracious, courteous, friendly human being-a true disciple of Christ. In every situation it was that basic divine-humanity of Christ that shone through Nikos.

Nikos leaves a big gap also on the Editorial Advisory Board of this journal. May God bless the memory of this great Orthodox soul, and grant him joy and peace in the presence of the Lord.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

— Todor Sabev

(Twenty-five years ago, at the WCC's Third Assembly in New Delhi, India, virtually all the Orthodox churches in the world who were *not already* members were welcomed into the Council.*

Orthodox ecumenical activity preceded New Delhi by many years. When historians of the 20th-century ecumenical movement list key milestones, they include a 1920 encyclical of the (Eastern Orthodox) Ecumenical patriarchate. Addressed to "all the Churches of Christ", the encyclical called for the formation of a "League of Churches".

Between the two world wars, Orthodox representatives were increasingly involved in the meetings and movements-Faith and Order, Life and Work, as well as student and missionary movements-that eventually flowed together to form the WCC. Still, not all of them felt ready to join the Council at its founding Assembly in 1948.

Two Orthodox churches joined the WCC during the 1950s. But it is the New Delhi Assembly with which full Orthodox participation in the WCC is most closely associated, for after 1961 almost all the members of this ancient Christian tradition were part of what many people considered a protestant movement.

This article is adapted and abridged from an address by WCC Deputy General Secretary Todor Sabev of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, reflecting on the first quarter-century of *full* Orthodox participation in WCC.)

*The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India is a founder member of the WCC-Ed.

Orthodox clergy and theologians have always been unanimous in their belief that unity in faith is a necessary condition for the reunion of doctrinally divided churches and Christian communities.

At the same time there has been a certain flexibility about the boundaries of the church, the degrees of division, the operation of grace among all who confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, the role of culture, ideology and other "non-theological" factors, and the interaction between the "vertical" and the "horizontal" dimensions in Christian life.

This flexibility means that Orthodox do not consider their participation in the WCC as something revolutionary. Rather, it is the fulfilment of a basic Christian duty. It is the natural consequence of the constant prayer "for the welfare of the Holy Churches of God and for the union of all".

For Orthodox churches WCC membership constitutes another attempt, like those made in the patristic period, to apply the apostolic faith to new historical situations and demands. What is new is that this attempt is being made together with christian bodies with whom there is no full unity. That makes for difficulties, but there are also many signs of real hope for growing fellowship, understanding and co-operation.

In line with their understanding of unity as the "image and likeness" of the ancient undivided church, orthodox representatives (even before the WCC was formed) used to issue separate "Eastern" interpretations of important questions on the ecumenical agenda when Orthodox theology diverged substantially from Protestant approaches.

Traditionally Faith and Order studies have attracted the greatest interest among the Orthodox. But the scope of Orthodox concerns in the WCC has been considerably enlarged. Often the topics they raise come out of the particular context and living witness of local Orthodox churches

An Orthodox consultation prior to the WCC's Sixth Assembly

(Vancouver, 1983) mentioned as some Orthodox contributions to the Council the emphasis on trinitarian theology, the primacy and urgency of unity and doctrine, spirituality, sacramental life and the centrality of the liturgy.

The Orthodox have also played a leading role in ecumenical dialogue about Scripture and Tradition, Eucharistic communion, conciliarity and catholicity missiology and renewal, proselytism and religious liberty.

At the same time, the Orthodox churches have benefitted from their presence in the WCC. The WCC has promoted ecumenical consciousness in many countries where there are Orthodox churches. It has fostered fraternal contacts and theological dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches and helped to strengthen the bonds between Eastern Orthodox Churches.

As Orthodox ecumenical participation has grown, the practice of making separate statements at international ecumenical meetings has given way to a new method: consultations and publications before major ecumenical events.

In the context of a tribute to the WCC as a comprehensive forum and privileged instrument of the ecumenical movement an Orthodox consultation in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1981 also identified four problems:

Orthodox theology and programmatic priorities cannot always find an adequate place in the WCC's present structure and working style.

The WCC's language and the way it elaborates theological statements are not always transparent enough to allow Orthodox positions to emerge as an integral part of WCC documents.

Under the constitutions and rules of the WCC and Orthodox canon law, we cannot expect more Orthodox churches to apply WCC membership. But Protestant churches and communities

continue to be admitted, reducing the proportion of Orthodox votes and participation.

Since the WCC is a council of churches, its constituencies should have the right to nominate their representatives to various bodies. This has not always been the case with some local Orthodox churches.

The Sofia consultation also made some suggestions which it said Orthodox churches would find desirable:

A reference to baptism should be included in the WCC Basis or at least in the criteria for admitting new member churches.

Procedures for achieving ecumenical consensus on doctrinal issues should be changed to avoid the possibility that delicate matters concerning unity in faith might be decided by "majority vote".

Governing bodies and staff should be encouraged to persevere in efforts to bring Orthodox thinking into all WCC activities.

Orthodox representation in WCC assemblies, committees commissions and staff should be increased.

All Orthodox Churches have to be represented on the Central Committee in proportion to their membership, historical importance and specific nature based on canon law.

Similar concerns were echoed at a meeting of an inter-Orthodox commission in Chambesy, Switzerland, earlier this year, again in the context of appreciation for the WCC's work. Meaningful Orthodox witness and specific theological contributions might be jeopardized, the chambesy meeting warned, "if the Orthodox Churches are not provided within the WCC with those necessary conditions which will enable them to act on the basis of their own ecclesiology and according to their own rationale".

Ecumenism of space - concern for Christian unity today - is inseparable from ecumenism in time - faithfulness to the apostolic and patristic teaching of the undivided church. The divine nature

of unity binds us with the fullness of the truth, holiness and love. Unity is a fullness of sacramental reality and a perfect koinonia of life-sharing.

The vocation of the Orthodox in the WCC is to appeal to the universality and a continuity of the Holy Tradition, coming through the centuries, nourishing the church's life today and throwing light toward the future.

The Orthodox accept the vision of the one church as "a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united" (as the Nairobi Assembly put it). But they are concerned about the requirements for this unity. It must be a unity in the apostolic truth not a mere external, federal structure for common action.

Historically, indeed, the Orthodox churches are the model of a "conciliar fellowship". Hence, their experience in living out this "conciliarity" in different historical, social and cultural situations—often full of conflicts and obstacles to the spirit of communion—can offer clues about the concept of "unity in diversity".

Worship, spirituality and life-style constitute an essential part of Orthodox involvement in the WCC. But faith and action form an integrated whole. Therefore the Orthodox do not (and must not) accept a separation between the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of the gospel.

While protecting the social witness of the church from politicization and identification with secular ideology, they should be further committed to major studies on Christian responsibility in the face of burning social issues, like the study of the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community.

The Orthodox churches also hear the voice of its youth for reconciliation and freedom. Recognizing the growing role of women in the life of the church, the Orthodox should allow themselves to be challenged to further theological research on the ministries of women.

But consistent with a tradition, liturgical practice and theological stand that underline Christ's eternal Sonship to God the Father, his masculine ontological relationship with the Church (his Bride) and hence the masculine priesthood for celebration of the sacraments, especially the holy eucharist, where priest or bishop is the ikon of Christ, the Orthodox do not envisage the ordination of women in the perspective that many WCC member Churches do. Nevertheless the restoration of the ministry of deaconesses and the promotion of women at all levels of church life are heartily welcomed by many Orthodox.

May the day be near when our commitment to the ecumenical ideal will be richly blessed by the Holy Spirit and enable us to celebrate the unity of all churches to witness together and to glorify our Risen Lord.

This is our prayer, our hope and our renewed ecumenical engagement on the 25th anniversary of the association of practically all Orthodox Churches with the WCC.

[Courtesy : *One World*]

SYRIAN AND ANGLICAN CHRISTIANS IN INDIA*

—Alan and Clare Amos

The story of Syrian Christianity in India and its relationships with the churches of the West is the story of a large number of 'might have beens': failed opportunities for mutual dialogue and growth, misunderstanding which have led to further schisms among Christians perhaps already over-prone to contention. It is to be hoped that this gathering may contribute, in however small a fashion, to a turning around and a growing together, both between Christians of East and West and between the different groups of Indian Christians themselves.

Many years before the English missionaries arrived in India towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Syrian Christians of India had already experienced Western Christianity as a hostile and divisive force. Tradition links the origin of Christianity in India with St. Thomas, and it is clear that Christians in India, both north and south, were firmly established by the fourth century AD. In the case of south India, the spread of the gospel to the sub-continent had been clearly facilitated by the trade routes, and the ships that sailed from Egypt, down the coast of Arabia and thence to the spice ports of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) brought with them protagonists of the new Middle Eastern faith, even as they brought back cinnamon and other exotic spices. Hence the homelands of Syrian Christianity in India are the south-western coastlands, called today Kerala, but known throughout history variously as the Malabar coast, Travancore and Cochin. One of the consequences of the route by which Christianity travelled to India was that in the fifth century AD, when large numbers of Christians outside the Roman Empire formulated their theological position rather differently to their co-religionists who owed

political allegiance to the Emperor in Constantinople, the Christians of South India along with the Christians of Arabia were labelled 'Nestorian.' This was to have harsh results in the sixteenth century with the arrival of fervent Portuguese Catholic missionaries for whom anything that smacked of heresy was anathema. The *Synod of Diamper* in 1599, was an attempt, backed up by the military and civil power of the Portuguese, to compel the Syrian Christians to renounce their 'Nestorianism' and submit themselves to the teaching of the Roman pontiff.

As so often in such campaigns, with the perspective of hindsight one can see that theology and culture were confused and intermingled in the Portuguese actions: for the Portuguese Jesuits the heresy of the Syrian Christians in India was not merely expressed by their adherence to Nestorian teaching, but also by their adherence to the Syriac language and Syriac forms of worship. It is only in very recent years that the Roman Catholic church has had a real vision of 'Catholicism' that is wider than merely Latinism. The confusion of culture and theology is a factor that also played a part in the later relationships of the Anglican church with the Syrian church of India, and indeed in the internal dissensions which have divided the Orthodox Syrian Church of India at the present day.

The unpopularity of the Portuguese actions can be measured by the fact that barely a half century later, in 1653, a large number of Indian Syrian Christians took an oath (the oath of Coonen Cross) to rid themselves of Portuguese and Jesuit influence. History is somewhat confused at this point, but it does seem that the Christians of India sought assistance from a Syrian patriarch in the Middle East, not the Nestorian patriarch, who was at that time inaccessible, but the *Jacobite* patriarch resident in southern Turkey. He sent a bishop as emissary to assist the Syrians. Some of the Indian Syrians then submitted themselves to the authority of the Jacobite patriarch, although a substantial group resolved their differences with Rome and remained as Roman Catholics. It is something of a theological irony that so many of the Indian Christians should, within the course of a century move from a Nestorian to a Jacobite position, but perhaps this emphasizes that the real point at issue was not doctrinal but a cultural conflict, and the entirely appropriate desire on the part

*A paper presented at the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Consultations, Verulam House, St. Albans, U.K. 7-11 October 1985

of the Syrians to remain loyal to their historic religious language and traditions.

These events provide something of a background to the Anglican involvement with the Syrian Christians of India during the nineteenth century. Travancore and Cochin were taken by the British from the Dutch in 1795, and in 1800 the first British 'Resident' of Cochin was appointed, virtually as ruler of the region. Very shortly after the British arrived in the area an Anglican chaplain of the East India company visited and met with many of the Syrian priests and the metropolitan, Mar Dionysios I. The visit of this chaplain, Revd Claudius Buchanan (1806) was to have great significance for future Anglican-Syrian relationships. Dr. Buchanan was keen to foster close links between the Anglican and the Syrians, he even spoke of a union between the two churches, though it is probable that what he meant was inter-communion rather than organic union. He pressed the Metropolitan on this question :

"One advantage would be that English clergymen.....might be permitted hereafter to preach in the numerous churches of the Syrians in India and aid them in the promulgation of pure religion.....and again that ordination by the Syrian bishop might qualify for preaching in English churches in India."

Like many nineteenth century Anglican clergymen Buchanan felt that there were mutual advantages to be gained by a close association between two churches that both prided themselves on being 'historic' but which were both non-Roman. The self-esteem of the Church of England was fostered by such contacts, and it was clearly a factor in Anglican enthusiasm for relationships with several of the Oriental Orthodox churches, and the Nestorian church during the period. The Syrian church of India with its savage memories of the Roman repression was particularly to be cherished.

The Metropolitan's reply to Dr. Buchanan was welcoming :
 "A union with the English Church, or at least such a connection as should appear to both the churches practicable and expedient, would be a happy event, and favourable to the advancement of religion in India."

Nonetheless Buchanan found many features of the life of the Syrian Christians which were not to his taste. Buchanan himself was only a visitor to the region, but his views were fairly similar to those of a Colonel Munro who was the British Resident in Travancore and Cochin during the second decade of the nineteenth century. As Resident, Munro had considerable power to express his ideas in action. He both admired the Syrian Church as a non-Roman church, but at the same time was determined to get rid of practices which did not accord with his evangelical views. He regarded such practices as the invocation of the saints or prayers for the dead as corruptions which had come about because the Syrian Christians had been subject to Roman influence for a period. Colonel Munro's solution was to seek the assistance of missionaries from the recently formed Church Missionary Society (C.M.S). Initially the missionaries, with the assistance of Colonel Munro, worked with the Syrian Christian community to build up the Church and people: a seminary was started at Kottayam, there was much literary work, including translations of the Bible and the English Book of Common Prayer into the Indian language of Malayalam, and the Resident, Munro, helped to relieve much of the financial and social pressure that the Syrian Christian community had existed under previously. But there was also an insensitivity and a lack of understanding on the part of the missionaries. Coming from the evangelical wing of the Church of England they were basically out of sympathy with the ecclesiology and structure of an Orthodox Church. One particular issue that seems to have caused a great deal of contention was that of language: the Anglican missionaries were keen that the Syrian Church should use the vernacular tongue of Malayalam, an attitude which was felt, by the Syrians, not surprisingly, to be blatant interference in their internal concerns. They regarded their use of Syriac as a mark of prestige and a sign of the antiquity of the Church. The gradual disillusionment of the Syrian Church and the missionaries with each other came to a climax in 1835. It is interesting to note in parenthesis that one of the factors that seems to have brought matters to a head was the rise of the Oxford Movement in England. The evangelical CMS missionaries were opposed to everything that the Oxford Movement stood for, and were determined to fight in India all the kinds of things that were troubling them at home. The moderate Anglican Bishop Daniel

Wilson of Calcutta paid a visit to Travancore and sought to play a reconciling role between the missionaries and the Syrians: his actions however were the catalyst that led to a definitive split between the missionaries and the Syrian Church. The missionaries now set about building a definite Anglican Church in Travancore, and attracted a few, although only a few, of the Syrian Christians, as well as some Indians who had previously been Hindus, largely of the depressed classes.

This however was by no means the end of the story. There were tensions within the Syrian community itself largely between those who had tended to stress the authority of the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, and those who were concerned to affirm the independence of the Syrian church in India. To some extent these reflected the attitudes held about the Anglican missionaries, broadly speaking those who most wished to affirm their loyalty to the Jacobite patriarch were at the same time the most hostile to the English influence. These tensions were shortly to resolve themselves into a fresh split in the church, a split which is associated with the person of Abraham Malpan, a priest of the Syrian church who had, probably under the influence of the Anglican missionaries, extensively revised the *Taksa*, the liturgy of the church. This was in 1837. The next 40 years saw a story of controversy and counter-controversy as the different elements within the church manoeuvred for power. It was an unsavoury business, involving both passionate family loyalties and eventual litigation in the courts. It is however interesting to note that the issue on which the eventual court decision turned was whether or not the Syrian Church of India was an independent church, or whether, to the contrary, it was under the jurisdiction of the Jacobite patriarch in the Middle East who had the right to appoint and depose bishops at will. In 1879 the 'Reform Party' lost their battles in the courts and in consequence formed a new Church, popularly known as the *Mar Thoma* Church which preserved much of the ethos and traditions of the Syrian Church, but also had been influenced by a 'Protestantizing' spirit. Clearly therefore the existence of the Mar Thoma church today owes something to the work of the early nineteenth century Anglican missionaries, but indirectly, and other factors also played a part in the split. It is true however that the Mar Thoma Church and the Anglicans of

South India (mainly today existing within the Church of South India) have very close links, participating in each others' ordinations and consecrations.

During the later nineteenth and early twentieth century there was something of a rapprochement between the Syrian Church of India (who now preferred to be known as the Orthodox Syrian Church) and English Anglican missionaries. This was mainly due to the fact that the Syrians now encountered a different kind of Anglican, 'the High Church' party who under the influence of the Oxford Movement had come to India as members of religious brotherhoods and sisterhoods (the Oxford Mission, the Cowley Fathers) and fully respected Orthodox sensibilities at the same time as being able to assist the Orthodox Syrians particularly with work in education and among the youth.

What are the lessons of history for Anglican and Orthodox Syrian relationships today? The Anglicans need to realize the ambiguities, tensions and complications that confront the Syrian Church of India, which is faced with affirming their self-identity not only before the Christians of the West, but also before the 'Eastern' Syrian Orthodox church of Antioch. Clearly the ambiguity of their relationship with their 'mother' church was one of the factors that assisted the process of schism in the nineteenth century, as it has also done more recently, which is witnessed to by the current split in the Church between the 'pro-patriarchal' and 'anti-patriarchal' parties. Above all the history of the Christian Churches in south India makes us realize the need for a deep humility and magnanimity towards fellow Christians divided from us.

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INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SECULAR STATE

—S. J. Samartha

(This is the text of one of the keynote addresses delivered at the International Seminar on "Inter-faith Dialogue for National Integration and Human Solidarity", sponsored by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi and held at the Madras Christian College, Tambaram, 27-31 January 1986. Dr. Samartha is a Visiting Professor at the United Theological College, Bangalore, South India.)

Indian society has been pluralistic for a longer time in history than any other country in the world. It continues to be so even to this day. People of different religious faiths, ideological regions, speaking different languages and stemming from different ethnic roots have been living together in our country for many centuries, sometimes in conflict, often in tension, but mostly in a spirit of co-existence. People of different religious persuasions have entered the corridor of history in our country through different doors. Today our destinies are intertwined in the life of the nation. We share the meaning and mystery of existence, the joys and sorrow of life. We all look forward to a common future as the country moves forward to the twentyfirst century.

The historic context in which we discuss the theme of this seminar is important. Ours is an ancient civilisation but a young nation. Under new leadership there is a quickening of pace in the march towards development. Attempts to cleanse the public life are under way. A new political culture is in the making. And yet, reasons for hope are mixed with questions of anxiety. The struggle of poor, oppressed and underprivileged people for a life of freedom self respect and human dignity is gathering momentum. Will they get a fair deal?

Science and technology are being harnessed to serve the needs of people as perhaps never before. But will the "scientific temper"

provide the critical space for religious faiths and culture values to contribute to the development of a more just and humane society?

With the politicisation of religions and its consequences on the life of the nation will religious communities themselves have the courage to be self-critical and to look beyond minority rights to human rights in the life of the nation? The question today seems to be not which among the many religions is true but what can religions contribute to strengthen the integrity of the nation and enrich human life in the world.

I

The theme of this seminar is "Inter-Faith Dialogue for National Integration and Human Solidarity". Some clarification of the terms is necessary to avoid misunderstanding.

In the English language the word "faith" can be used both in the singular and in the plural. It is often used interchangeably with the word "religion". In most other languages, including Sanskrit and many of the Indian languages, this usage is not possible. Translated back into our own languages, which we often do within ourselves even when English is used for communication, the terms "faith" and "religion" do not always convey the same meaning. It is necessary to be aware of this to avoid confusion. One assumes that the term "inter-faith" used here is synonymous with "inter-religious". That is, what is envisaged here is dialogue between people of different religious communities in the country.

Faith and religion, though related, do not indicate the same reality. Faith is the human response to the mystery of the divine. It is the original impulse behind religions. It precedes and transcends particular religious traditions. Faith creates community and community nourishes faith. Faith is enshrined in and is expressed through community, and is in turn sustained by it. This is why religious communities are important in society¹.

1. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief*, Princeton University Press, 1979, pp. 3 ff.; K.L. Seshagiri Rao, *The Concept of Sraddha*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1974, pp. 4 ff.

One need not get into definitions of "religion" here. But the use of the word "religion" in the singular in a multi-religious society is debatable. It gives the impression that there is something called "religion" behind religions, which can be isolated, defined, analysed, and then manipulated and controlled for human purposes. What we have around us is not "religion" in the abstract but religious communities in the plural, with their different visions of reality and impulses of faith, their beliefs, traditions, rituals, symbols, their network of meanings and patterns of conduct which together give a specific identity to a particular religious community.

Although the focus of this seminar is on inter-religious issues one should not forget that there are powerful ideologies also operating in society. The secular humanist and the scientific-technological ideologies question the very foundations of religions. The inter-action between religions and ideologies should not be forgotten. There are ideological dimensions in religions and religious dimensions in ideologies. Therefore it is not enough to discuss the sociological function of religions in society. One should also take into account the theological validity of their truth-claims.

Dialogue is between people. There can be no dialogue between "faiths" or "religions" or "ideologies". This is sometimes forgotten when academic people come together for debate. Dialogue is not so much a matter of discussions as of relationships. It has more to do with people than with ideas. Ideas are indeed important and should be subjected to rigorous critical enquiry. No one should under-estimate their importance. Dialogue, however, is a spirit, a mood, an attitude towards neighbours of other faiths. Dialogue demands both speaking and listening, giving and receiving. If it should contribute, in some small measure, towards national integrity and human solidarity it needs, above all, a climate of goodwill, trust and confidence in each other.

Commitment without tolerance breeds fanaticism. Tolerance without commitment degenerates into shallow friendliness. Without theological backbones we become spiritual jelly fishes. How to be committed to one's own faith and, at the same time, be open to the visions of our neighbours is the dilemma faced by partners in any dialogue. Misunderstandings have to be removed. Suspi-

cions have to be overcome. A climate of confidence and trust has to be created slowly, painstakingly, deliberately. A new vocabulary of communication has to be created in order to overcome the limitations of language. We need to recover the gift of human friendship.

National integration is a term which is heard very often these days. Without personal integrity there can be no national integration. And, unless religious and moral values are critically recovered from our different traditions and become real in the lives of individuals and communities national integrity will remain only a distant dream. In a multi-religious and multi-ideological country national integrity is not so much a goal to be achieved as a quest to be pursued. We are a nation-in-the-making.

II

With the tragic memories of partition still fresh in the minds of people India opted for a secular state. In a multi-religious country this is indeed justified, for only a secular political framework can provide neutral space for people of different religious persuasions and ideological convictions to make their contribution to the value bases of the nation. A theocratic state based on one religious ideology would be unbearable in a multi-religious country. Therefore the secular nature of the Indian state has to be cherished and guarded against any theocratic tendencies. The "normative plurality" of the country is indeed a safeguard against any fascist tendencies, religious or ideological².

However, during the past four decades, the secular state, fearful of all religions, has failed to provide creative spaces for religions to make any serious contribution to the moral life of the nation. Unlike in Britain, which is fast becoming a multi-religious society, where in educational institutions, and the media there is room for teaching and learning about different religions, in India the study of religions has been unfortunately banished from schools and colleges. Generations of students have been brought up with

2. Rajni Kothari and Shiv Vishwanath, "Moving Out of 1984", *Mainstream*. Annual, 1984, No. 305. January 1985, pp. 33 ff.

scarcely any informed understanding of their own religions or of their neighbours. This may be one reason why there is such an eroism of moral values in personal and public life. The secular state and the secular ideology behind it have generated "equal indifference" towards all religions.

Let it be understood clearly that this is not an uncritical defence of religions. The role of religions in history has always been ambiguous.

Established religions have often sided with the rich and powerful over against the poor and the oppressed. Under the slogan "religion is in danger" they have often resisted the human rights of individuals in the community. They have legitimized unjust social structures, resisted social change, exploited superstitions and dogmas, and have often been concerned with power, prestige and comfort rather than with service, humility and sacrifice.

While this is true of most religions in history it is equally true that there are liberative resources within religions which have inspired individuals and groups [to fight against tyranny and injustice.³ This fact has been almost completely ignored by the secularists. They have failed to recognise the finer distinctions within religions in rudely dismissing religions from the highroads of modern life. Moral values and emotional commitment to public life as a vocation are derived from religious roots. "Therefore", remarks Surindere Suri, "to reject religious beliefs as unsecular is to empty public life of its moral and social base."⁴ To displace religions from the formal as well as the informal arena of political life and to relegate them to the sphere of personal belief and private commitment shows very poor understanding of both religions and society.⁵

3. See Stephen Fuchs, *Rebellious Prophets*, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi 1965; S.J. Samartha "Religious Imperatives and Social Concerns" in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXX No. 3 & 4, Sept.-Dec. 1983, Bangalore, pp. 110 ff. and K.C. Abraham, "Role of Religion and Culture in Action and politics" in *Faith Action and Politics*, Bangalore 1984, pp. 93 ff.
4. "Roots of Communalism A Socio Historical Analysis" In *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, Dec. 1984, Bangalore, p.79.
5. C.T. Kurien, *Meadows*, Madras, Vol.3, No.6, Nov. 1985, p.17.

Perhaps the most serious argument against recognising any role for religions in India's political life is the charge that they breed and promote communalism. Probably no other single factor has so strongly militated against the role religions in public life in independent India as the charge of communalism against them. Is this true?

Recent studies on the so called "communal" riots have shown that this is not an accurate verdict. Communalism is the belief that a group of people, merely because they belong to a particular religion, have, as a result, common social, economic and political interests. One consequence of this notion is the uncritical assumption that because people belong to different religious communities their interests in the life of the nation must be antagonistic and mutually exclusive, and that therefore mutual hatred and hostility between different religious communities is normal but that tolerance, cooperation and peaceful co-existence are only temporary and expedient. Nothing is farther from the truth. Unless this vicious notion is erased from the minds of people life in the larger community would always be one of tension and conflict.⁶

Studies on recent communal clashes including those towards the end of 1984, have brought out the point that religions are "not the *causative* factor but the instrumental factor in such clashes ... it is *made to appear* as the causative factor."⁷ Economic and political factors and the question of power relations between different groups and political parties play a large role in these riots. Therefore to call them *religious* or *communal* riots is quite wrong. The peace potentialities within different religions have been seldom brought out by leaders except after the event. It is because of the recur-

6. See Bipin Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984. "Communalism was the false consciousness of the historical process of the last 150 years because, objectively, no real conflict between the interests of Hindus and Muslims existed...seeing religion as the main inner contradiction in social, economic and political life was certainly an aspect of false consciousness." p.167.
7. Asghar Ali Engineer, Bombay-Bhiwandi Riots in National Political perspective" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XIX, No.29, July 1984, pp. 1134 ff; S. Tasmeen Ahmed, "Second Thoughts on Secular Democracy" in *Mainstream* Aug. 1984, p. 15ff.

rence of these riots, which fly out as sparks from within a volcano, that interreligious dialogues are even more important in our country to reduce tensions, resolve conflicts and tame political passions *before* conflagrations set in.

Sometimes, in a mood of lofty condescension, born out of prejudice, ignorance, and an almost total lack of sensitivity to the profound dimensions of religious life, secularists succeed in giving genuinely religious people an inferior political consciousness. They give the impression that only secularists who reject religions are truly nationalist. Genuinely religious people are made to feel like crows that have wandered by mistake into a conference of swans.

One consequence of this attitude is the encouragement given to hypocrisy in public life. Even some of those who claim to be guided by the "scientific temper", in private consult astrologers for auspicious moments. Political leaders find it profitable to mix agnosticism and religiosity in various proportions depending on the occasion. Religions are used as handmaidens to political interests. Some leaders are secular in public, but religious in private. Others are religious in public but are really agnostics in their personal lives.

Among the leaders of India Nehru was secular both in private and in public. "Instead of committing himself to the hopeless task of banishing religion from politics while expanding democratic participation, he dared to seek a politics which would be infused with the right kind of religion and be tolerant."⁸

What we now witness in the country is mostly "secular riots", justified later on in non-secular terms, blaming religions for the benefit of the victims and the instruments of violence. Truly religious people do not want their religious faith to be politicised. In fact, those who are strongly rooted in their faith are not easily roused to fanatical actions. It is those who are insecure and uncertain about their faith who are easily roused by the slogan of "pious

8. Ashis Nandy, "An-Anti-Secularist Manifesto" in *Seminar*, No. 34, Oct. 1985, New Delhi, p.20.

secularists" that religion is in danger. Religions do not need nor should they seek state patronage. But the state has the duty and the responsibility to provide creative space for dialogue in order that a climate of profound tolerance might grow in the life of the nation.

III

What then, is the purpose of interreligious dialogue in India today? The purpose of such dialogue is threefold: (i) to remove ignorance and misconceptions about each other's beliefs and practices and to promote informed understanding, critical appreciation and balanced judgment on matters of faith; (ii) to work together for common purposes in society, particularly where human rights, social and economic justice, and peace in the community and the nation are concerned; and (iii) to bring to bear the deeper resources of our respective faiths on the basic problems of human existence that arise because of human finiteness.

Perhaps the most urgent task today is to provide young people who are the future citizens and leaders of the country with sound knowledge of our pluralistic religious and cultural heritage. Our educational institutions have been emptied of these vital matters for more than four decades. Has not the time come to restore to the halls of our academic life one of the most basic components of our national culture and religious heritage? And because ours is a pluralist society careful attention has to be given to the ways and means through which religious and cultural values of different traditions are communicated to and shared by our young people.

The absence of useful educational material helpful to young people in inter-religious situations is tragic in India. One of the ironic twists of history is that today the most helpful material in this respect is coming from Britain rather than from India. In addition to the inter-religious worship material for use in schools and the carefully prepared broadcasts of different religions, the Open University in Britain has probably the most helpful series for the study of various religions, including a volume of *Inter-Religious Encounter*, where original selections from different reli-

gions are put together with great care and sensitivity.⁹ People of different religious persuasions and ideological convictions are already working together for common purposes in society, particularly in social service projects. In the struggle against injustice, in the efforts to eradicate poverty, in bringing health and healing to people, and in the removal of illiteracy people of different religions are indeed coming together. But perhaps the time has come to recognize these not as projects of one particular religious service agency but as expressions of the human concern of all people in the community. Human solidarity at depth is even more important than separate religious labels.

At the risk of touching sensitive matters and raising controversial issues certain questions need to be brought into the open because they are the concerns of the whole nation. For example, questions of caste and untouchability, of marriage and dowry, of divorce and maintenance, of conversion, reconversion and non-conversion are not matters that are the concern of just one particular religious community. They are the concerns of all religious communities. Moreover, people who do not profess to be religious and who are guided by ideological convictions are also affected by them. These are human questions in the life of the nation. Therefore, rather than keep aloof for fear of being accused of "interference" has not the time come to seek a larger framework in which all can discuss these matters seeking mutual enrichment? Inter-religious dialogues may help as the beginning of a new process of mutual help. What is specifically religious or what is distinctively Hindu or Buddhist or Jain or Muslim or Christian or Sikh must also be genuinely human.

Further, beyond these matters of immediate concern in society there are deeper issues of life which people of all religions have to face. Some of these are: the meaning of transcendence in an increasingly secular and technological society, the question of harmony in communities torn by religious and ideological strife, the urgency of peace in a world threatened by nuclear war, the

problem of finiteness or sin or *avidya* or *dukkha* or alienation, and the need to overcome the brokenness of humanity and heal the rift between humanity and nature. Rather than tackle these problems separately, perhaps the time has come, at least at certain points and limited areas, to consider them together.

In our country through long centuries of struggle, conflict and immense human suffering a certain delicate balance between different religious communities has been accepted. Although this is often broken by outbursts of violence, nevertheless, deep down in the cave of our hearts there is a feeling for mutual tolerance. This is based on at least two factors. One is the recognition of a sense of mystery where ultimate matters are concerned. The other is the rejection of exclusive attitudes where it is quite obvious that religious life can be, perhaps ought to be, lived pluralistically. Inter-religious dialogues should examine these and, maybe, recover them as being helpful to all people.

To recognise a sense of mystery is to accept human limitations where truth is concerned. Mystery provides the ontological basis for tolerance without which it runs the risk of being uncritical friendliness. This mystery, *Satyasya Satyam* (the Truth of the Truth) is the transcendent centre which remains beyond all human apprehensions of it. It is near yet far, knowable, yet unknowable, intimate yet ultimate. It is beyond *tarka* (cognition) but is open to *anubhava* (intuition, experience). Even while its meaning is revealed to us its mystery still remains beyond us. It is because of the mysterious nature of truth that particular apprehensions of it cannot claim absolute finality in history.

Further, it also makes it impossible to take an "either/or" attitude where ultimate matters are concerned. Surely, in day to day life choices have to be made between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, honesty and corruption. But in profound matters of faith certainty without humility leads to arrogance.

When exclusive claims are combined with economic affluence, political power and military strength, as has often happened in history, they make relationships between different communities in the nation difficult, and may even become dangerous to world

9. There are 33 units in this series so far. The volume of readings is entitled *Man's Religious Quest: A Reader*, and is edited by Whitefield Foy. Croom Helm, London, in association with the Open University, 1978, pp.725.

peace. The ethical consequences of exclusive claims on the part of one community of faith on its relationship to other communities of faith should not be ignored in meeting the theological imperatives of the community that makes such claims. It is necessary always to keep in mind the distinction between truth and "truth-claims".

In a pluralistic society we need to reject the secular tolerance which is indifferent to all religious values. We also need to reject the religious tolerance which affirms that all religions are the same when, in actual fact, they are distinct, different, even "unique." In the core of every religion there is something which belongs to it alone, separately and decisively. It is this which makes each religion distinct and precludes any one of them from claiming "uniqueness" for itself excluding others.

Therefore, a particular religion can claim to be decisive for some people, and some people can claim that a particular religion is decisive for them, but no religion is justified in claiming that it alone is decisive for all. People of every religious community have their distinctive contribution to make to the continuing quest for truth. Relativity, in this sense, does not undermine the integrity of religious life, but on the contrary, strengthens and mutually enhances the quality of the quest. In a persistently pluralist society like ours "dialogue into truth" therefore should become a welcome possibility.

This means that because of the nature of truth and for the sake of human solidarity claims of exclusiveness have to be re-examined. Exclusiveness puts fences round the mystery. It divides people into "we" and "they". This is at least one reason why people who make open or hidden claims for exclusiveness find it almost impossible to live together with neighbours of other faiths except on very superficial social terms. Surely, dialogue should go beyond exchanging sweets and cakes during different festivals and attending marriages and funerals.

If only one religion is true dialogue is impossible. If all religions are the same dialogue is unnecessary. Only when different religions are recognised as distinctive and different

responses to the mystery of truth can dialogue become a genuine relationship between different communities of faith and open up possibilities of mutual enrichment in the larger life of the nation.

In our pluralistic society therefore we need a commitment that requires sharing of our faith with our neighbours. We also need a tolerance that makes mutual enrichment possible. Inter religious dialogue helps us to hold together in balance both commitment to our particular faith and openness to those of our neighbours.

News and Notes

Syndesmos Assembly Emphasizes Baptism

EFFINGHAM (Surrey/England)—More than 100 delegates and observers attended the 12th General Assembly (here, 17-24 August) of Syndesmos, the World Fellowship of Eastern Orthodox Youth. The assembly decided the fellowship's work for the next three years is to stress implications of baptism, such as young people's dedication to the church, and their responsibility in its mission and service to the world.

Assembly keynote addresses were given by Paul Tarazi, a priest and biblical scholar from Lebanon, and Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), from London. Both spoke of the need for broader visions than those of eucharistic theology prevalent among Orthodox in recent decades.

Similar concerns came in reports of committee discussions. One urged Orthodox to avoid twin dangers—"closing them [young people] into an ecclesiastical universe without any opening onto the world" and "presenting faith like a group of laws which must be adhered to in order to be truly Christian."

Another said the church "must play a prophetic role in the world. We may not necessarily provide answers to contemporary world problems, but we can and must challenge the various movements in the world."

Discussing the role of church members, especially women, Metropolitan Anthony said theological reflection worthy of Orthodoxy has yet to be done. He said much Orthodox thinking on the issue insults women.

He also warned against creating a "liturgical ghetto" in Orthodoxy, and said the "pyramid heresy" in church structure often leads to oppression.

The assembly spoke of an important role for Syndesmos in producing a "generation of Orthodox capable of going behind stereotypes, and communicating the Orthodox faith to Christians of Western traditions, and to all those around them in a language they understand" and "involving the youth of local Orthodox churches in the worldwide ecumenical youth movement." (Syndesmos is currently a major channel for recruiting young Orthodox for World Council of Churches, and regional ecumenical programs.)

The next Syndesmos assembly was set for 1989 in the US. It is to include on its agenda better relationships between Oriental and Eastern Orthodox.

Before that, an iconographers' conference, mission seminar, agape camp, fourth consultation of Orthodox theological schools, and some jointly arranged ecumenical meetings are projected.

Bibles to Cuba, China

STUTTGART (FRG)—The United Bible Societies, based here, announced last month that it shipped 20,000 Spanish-language Bibles to Cuba in July, and that the China Christian Council has ordered 200,000 Bibles, to be printed in Nanjing. The Cuban Bible Society was closed in 1968, but there have been sporadic deliveries of Scriptures since then, UBS said. UBS also said the Chinese government has waived import taxes on printing and binding machinery for the Amity Printing Press to be established in Nanjing. It is to give priority to Bibles, New Testaments, hymn books, theological journals, and textbooks.—*EPS*

Russian Orthodox Open Information Centre

MOSCOW—In connection with celebrations in 1988 to mark the 1000 years since Prince Vladimir of Kiev endorsed Christianity for his realm, the Russian [Eastern] Orthodox Church opened an information centre here, including meeting space, an icon exhibition, tourist advice, and a shop selling religious art and records. On the basis of an agreement, with the governments eminarians and priests are in some cases to be guides at Soviet religious sites.—*EPS*

"WCC Executive Committee Statement on Nicaragua"

This item was approved by the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches at its meeting in September.

The sovereignty of the Nicaraguan nation is under threat. Its territorial integrity has been violated. The right of its people for self-determination has been challenged. Their efforts to shape their own destiny are being thwarted. Pain and suffering have been imposed on them. They are crying out for help to fulfill their aspirations for peace and justice.

The attempt of the US government to destabilize and overthrow the Nicaraguan government has become more direct and blatant by the decision of the Congress to approve US \$100 million in new funding to the 'contras'. This decision has come soon after the US government's refusal to honour the ruling of the World Court which determined that the US support to rebel forces in Nicaragua constitutes a violation of international law. Large sections of the US public, including the churches, have declared their strong opposition to their government's policy on Nicaragua.

The recent visit of the commissioners of the Christian Medical Commission to Nicaragua and the meeting of the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development held there, provided new opportunities for representatives of the WCC to listen to the people of Nicaragua and to learn about their achievements, especially in education and health care, and their problems.

Both groups underlined the need for renewed support of the ecumenical community to the Nicaraguan people at this time of profound crisis. They have reported on the devastating effects of the US economic sanctions and military intervention on Nicaragua.

In a letter to churches and Christians in the USA [EPS86.08.83] ...The Baptist Convention of Nicaragua said..."this measure [US support for forces fighting the Nicaraguan government] entails a financing of pain, of death, and of the destruction of our suffering people. ...Because of the economic embargo against Nicaragua,

the war imposed by the White House through the counter-revolution and the disinformation campaigns and pressures against this country, life is becoming almost impossible here..."

The Executive Committee :

reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Nicaragua in their efforts "to choose an order responsive to their own history and distinctive culture, independent and non-aligned, pluralistic and with an economy designed to benefit the poor". (Central Committee, August 1985);

calls upon member churches to encourage their governments to use their influence to bring an end to the economic and military intervention against Nicaragua, and to increase their assistance through trade and aid; to continue to uphold the Nicaraguan churches in intercessions and to send messages to the Nicaraguan churches on the occasion of the National Worship Celebration for Peace and Justice in Nicaragua on October 31, 1986; [and] to increase their support to the Nicaraguan churches and related organizations;

and *commends* and *upholds* the significant witness of the churches and Christians in the USA (in the spirit of the covenant made with Christians of Central America at the time of the [WCC Sixth Assembly), through pastoral and material support to the churches in Nicaragua, the sanctuary movement and the challenge to their government's policy.-ESP

THE STAR OF THE EAST

THE STAR OF THE EAST is an Indian Orthodox ecumenical quarterly, published under the editorial responsibility of Metropolitan Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios of Delhi. It is the continuation of an occasional journal carrying the same name originally published by the late Rev. Dr. C. T. Eapen of the Orthodox Syrian Church of India. The journal deals with contemporary issues of ecumenism, especially from the perspective of the Orthodox Churches, and will carry news about the major events in the life of these Churches.

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